malpractice is that the commission allowed by the oil industry to the dealers in India is said to be lowest in the World; and

(c) if so, what steps Government have taken to check it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) There is a possibility of adulteration of petrol with naphtha and other solvents for pecuniary gains. It is very difficult to asses the extent of such adulteration.

(b) The easy miscibility and price differential between petrol and naphtha and other solvents are the main reasons for adulteration of petrol. The commission for dealers is revised from time to time. Govt. have recently revised the dealers' commission in November, 2001.

(c) The Oil Marketing Companies have a system of periodic/ surprise check of retail outlets to check adulteration of petrol and diesel. Apart from this, the Anti Adulteration Cell set up in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas also carries out checking of retail outlefs. Action is taken under the Marketing Discipline Guidelines (MDG) and/or Dealership. Agreement against retail outlet dealers who are found to be indulged in malpractices.

Losses Suffered in ONGC Fire

2989. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for causing fire to ONGC, oil well near Vagra in Gujarat;

(b) whether ONGC has ultra modern equipment for extinguishing such fire, if so, the numebr of days it took to extinguishing the fire; and

(c) whether it is a fact that unsocial persons in concerned with ONGC employees, while commuting oil, caused this fire; the number of persons burned and died due to this fire, and the quantum of loss suffered by Government/ONGC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (c) A fire occurred on 30.10.2001 in well number 345 in the oil field of Ankleshwar Project of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) located in Bharuch in the State of Gujarat due to attempted pilferage by some miscreants. The Crisis Management Team of ONGC is well equipped with manpower and materials for dousing well-fires at a short notice and the fire at well No. 345 was controlled within 10 days. While three persons died in the fire, allegedly an employee of ONGC was also involved in the pilferage. The total loss, including expenditure imcurred in controlling the fire and reviving the well, is estimated to be around Rs. 5 crores.

Prices of Petroleum Products

2990. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI:
SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the prices of petroleum products were raised recently;

(b) if so, the magnitude of the increase in each case;

(c) the reasons for increasing the prices of petroleum products; and

(d) the details of measures taken by Government to reduce operational costs so as to provide benefits to the consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (c) The Government have not hiked the basic ex-storage point prices of petroleum products recently. However, the retail selling prices of petrol, diesel and domestic LPG have gone up with effect from the midnight of 9th/10 November, 2001 due to the increase in dealers'/distributors' commission. The dealers' commission on petrol and diesel was increased by Rs. 135 KL and Rs. 88/KL respectively. The distributors' commission on LPG (domestic) was increased by Rs. 1.02/cylinder.

(d) Various steps taken by oil companies to reduce operational cost include rationalization of manpower, upgradation of technology,